

*The Centennial Exhibition
of the Architectural League*

ARTISTS & ARCHITECTS

COLLABORATION

*Barbaralee Diamonstein, Curator
Vincent Scully, Paul Goldberger,
Stephen Prokopoff, Jonathan Barnett,
Jane Livingston*

*Sponsored by the National
Endowment for the Arts, Philip
Morris Incorporated, and the New
York State Council for the Arts*

*Emilio Ambasz & Michael Meritet
James Freed & Alice Ayccock
Frank Gehry & Richard Serra
Michael Graves & Lennart Anderson
Hugh Hardy & Jack Beal and
Sondra Freckelton*

*Richard Meier & Frank Stella
Charles Moore & Alice Wingwall
Cesar Pelli & William Bailey
Robert A.M. Stern & Robert Graham
Stanley Tigerman & Richard Haas
Susana Torre & Charles Simonds*



The Architectural League

Founded in 1881, The Architectural League of New York, a national, non-profit, interdisciplinary membership organization addresses issues of architectural design and theory, and works to further the collaboration of architects, artists, and other design professionals.

The Architectural League sponsors exhibitions, research studies, and other projects which explore innovative ideas in architecture and related art and design fields. The League also organizes lecture programs and meetings relating to eight basic areas—architecture, painting, sculpture, landscape architecture, industrial design, architectural engineering, crafts and urban design—as well as special programs for young architects.

Membership in The League is open to all those interested; its offices are located in the Urban Center at the historic Villard Houses, 457 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022, (212) 753-1722.

The Architectural League Centennial Exhibition represents the collaborative efforts of many people who have earned our deep thanks—more than can possibly be singled out here. But there are some whose contributions were so indispensable that they must be mentioned: our genuine appreciation to George Weissman, Chairman of the Board of Philip Morris Incorporated, and to Michael Pittas, Director, Design Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts—it was their support and encouragement that transformed our project into a reality.

Collaboration: An Introduction

by Barbaralee Diamonstein,
Curator of the Exhibition

The Architectural League was founded in 1881 with the expressed aim of encouraging architects to work closely with sculptors and painters. After many years during which that aim was more often frustrated than fulfilled, we seem to have arrived at a moment when architects are once again seriously considering factors like decoration, psychological impact, and historical resonance in their work. For half a century or so, the profession had been dominated by an austere and all too pedantic Modernism. But now, architecture is, in effect, being liberated, and architects need no longer fear that they will be accused of "violating the spirit of the age" if they work into their projects a mural, a stained glass panel, a sympathetic sculpture, or even a touch of pure whimsy. At the same time, some painters and sculptors seem to be moving toward art that is part of the whole environment, or that actively seeks to reshape it. According to Professor Vincent Scully, architecture is "only part of one large human art, indeed of what must be regarded as the fundamental art, which is the shaping of the physical environment and of living in it... We therefore cannot think about the present and the future of architecture without thinking about all the other arts as well. "We have," he adds, "recently been able to think our way back to an appreciation of Beaux-Arts architecture and its collaborative achievement. Is that the end of our search? The question of how architecture and sculpture and secondarily, painting, should relate to each other is raised anew by modern architecture."

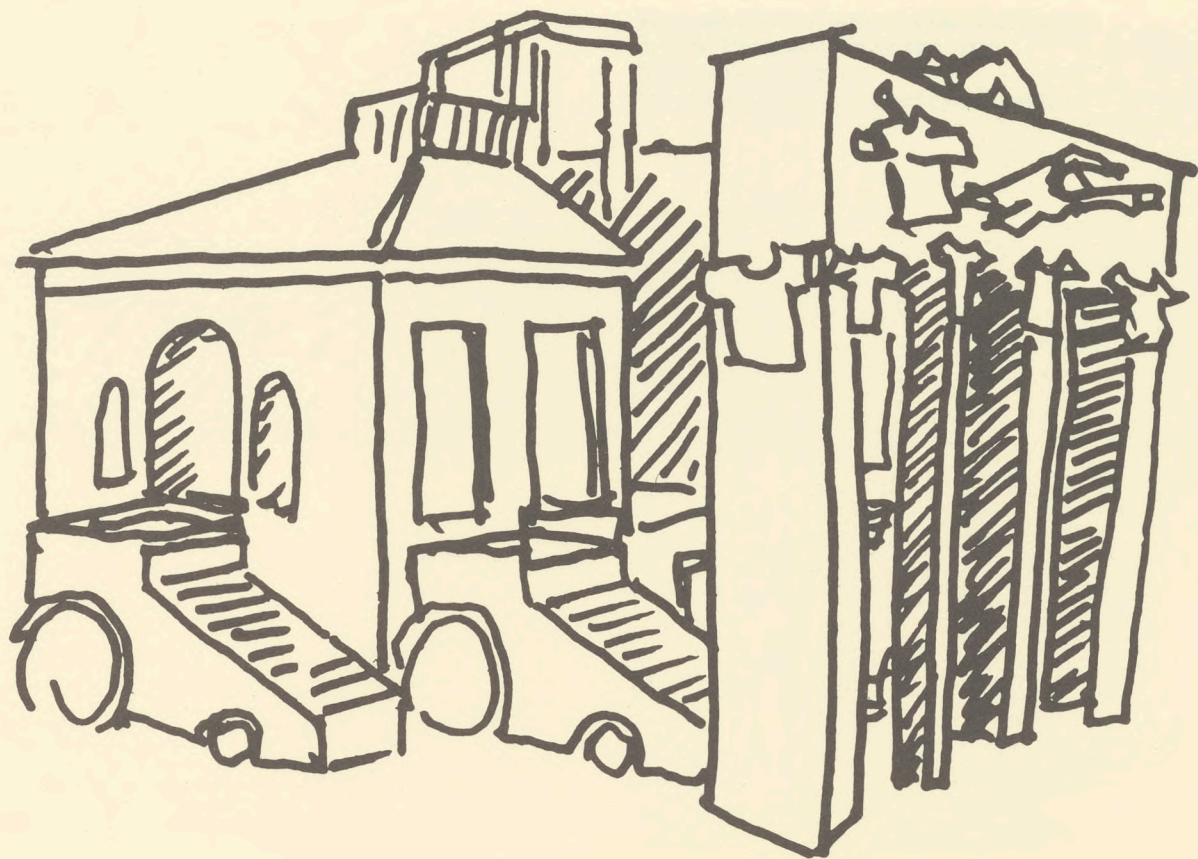
Architect: Charles Moore
Artist: Alice Wingwall
Project: *The Stratford Fragments:
Extravisionary Perception Based on Articulation,
Definition and Wheels*

Coinciding with these developments, there has also been an increasing movement toward making art an integral part of public buildings, through official government programs that set aside a small part of the total construction and design budget for works of art. Stephen Prokopoff, Director of Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art, states that "The largest single client for public art today is the United States General Services Administration, which has commissioned, in less than two decades, more than 175 major works by almost as many artists to embellish federal facilities... (and) in addition to the familiar mural or outdoor sculpture, more inventive solutions, now used occasionally, should be considered; art could be integrated into the *entire* planning of the building."

Unfortunately, some of the results of these government programs have been disappointing. Some of the art was simply second-rate, or, even when it was of high quality, it did not seem an integral part of the building—the sculpture seemed merely to have been placed in a convenient courtyard, the painting simply hung on a long expanse of wall. But the basic idea is an important one, entirely consonant with the League's original goal and with the concept that informs this Centennial project.

When The Architectural League was young, artists and architects could look to the example of Richardson's Trinity Church in Boston with its paintings and glass by John LaFarge, or to the Boston Public Library by McKim, Mead & White with mural paintings by such artists as Puvis de Chavannes, Edwin Austin Abbey and John Singer Sargent.

The 1880's and 1890's were a self-confident time, a time when artists and architects thought they knew what their art was, and shared a common ground of understanding on which to base their collaboration. That spirit of mutuality was soon to fade, however, if not to disappear entirely. Architecture critic Paul Goldberger observes that, "The Bauhaus may have seen the collaboration between architects and artists as the modern ideal, but the fact of the matter is that the post war years have been characterized by little true collaboration. These decades, the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's, for all the talk of true collaboration, were fundamentally times of art placed *in* buildings, not art made and from and about particular works of architecture or, more important, the reverse—architecture made *for* particular works of art. Most of the 'collaborations,' even the most successful ones, were in fact juxtapositions more than anything else—they were works of art placed within works of architecture, with the chief role of sculpture being to fill the space, and the chief role of painting being to distract our eye and provide visual relief."



Considering recent history, it seemed a particularly good moment for The Architectural League to commemorate its Centennial by helping to redefine and rekindle the concept of collaboration among the arts. This exhibit will, we hope, achieve a number of things: help to illuminate the historic relationship between architecture and its allied arts; trace the uneven progress of that relationship in the United States during the last century; describe the complexities of the present, still somewhat strained relationship; and chart some possible directions for the future.

Eleven teams for the collaborative projects in this exhibition were commissioned, each beginning with an architect, who then selected an artist to work with him or her. The teams collaborated on proposals that were supposed to strike a delicate balance between the visionary and the pragmatic—or at least the remotely plausible. Some of the teams functioned quite smoothly. Others, not surprisingly, proved to be less than compatible, at least for a while, though almost all did, ultimately, get together.

From this experience we have emerged with a new appreciation for both the potential of collaboration between architects and other artists, and an increased awareness of its inherent difficulties. If architects and artists are alike in sharing a sense of certitude about their work, in priding themselves on possessing a singular vision, they are about as different as can be in their ways of achieving their goals. Perhaps it is this dissimilarity of method that has been at the root of the historical difficulty in

achieving genuine collaboration between artists and architects. Jane Livingston, Assistant Director of Washington's Corcoran Gallery of Art, believes that "the really crucial issue is bound up with the good will that artists and architects feel towards one another, and the ability to think and feel authentically on the part of both the creators and the patrons...it is the possibility of true cooperation—the subsuming of personal ego by both architects and artists in a larger effort, even while summoning will and inventiveness in the name of ultimate innovation—that most begin to concern us more urgently than it has until now."

Architecture has always been something of a team effort, Ayn Rand's vision of the architect as the last embattled individualist notwithstanding. It is a discipline involving many minds and hands, an ongoing exchange of ideas and skills. Paradoxically, because so much of architecture is a team enterprise, many architects develop strong points of view in order to shape their work. Painting and sculpture, on the other hand, have traditionally called for solitary, often totally isolated, endeavor. Since the late nineteenth century this isolation seems to have increased. More and more, the visual arts have been concerned with their own forms, so much so that many works almost seem to require inert or totally neutral surroundings.



Some artists have even sought to design entire environments rather than objects. In any event, most contemporary painters and sculptors are unalterably opposed to creating anything that might be considered subordinate decoration. At the same time, architects have gone their own way and have aimed increasingly at creating pure esthetic experiences that can exist on their own terms, free of other embellishment—visual and spatial compositions of lines and forms, enclosures and expanses. Distilled, the difference is in functionalism: architecture's intrinsic relation *to* society, and art's freedom *from* it.

Asking artists and architects, with their differences in perspective and in the recent history of their arts, to collaborate with each other was an audacious enterprise. Yet the members of our eleven teams persevered admirably in their attempts to overcome the professional and psychological barriers that obstruct the growth of respect or, for that matter, sympathy.

It has often been said that true collaboration can only occur when the architect and the artist are the same person. I believe that we have proved that there are exceptions and have ended up with significant examples of the possibilities of collaboration, although it would be too optimistic to describe them as prototypes.

For all concerned, especially the architects and artists, this exhibition was more a labor of love than of commerce. All were committed to the theory that animated the entire project: that architecture and art, after their long separation, are again converging; that the two may sometimes collide, but with patient encouragement may more often come together in fruitful collaboration; and that both professions—and we, the public they are meant to serve—will benefit from the process.

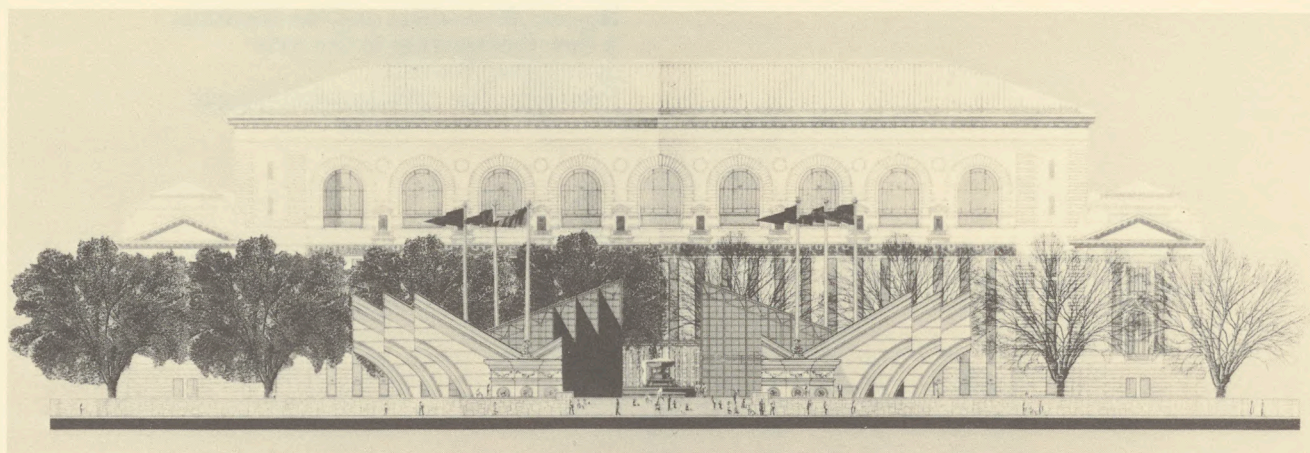
**Beyond Revivalism and the Bauhaus:
A New Partnership in the Arts**

by Jonathan Barnett

President, The Architectural League

We are all familiar with the equestrian statues on the war memorials or the allegorical mural paintings of thrift, commerce, and industry at the local bank, legacies of the time when artists and architects were trying to revive traditional relationships among the fine arts. Sometimes these efforts at integration of the arts were successful, particularly in churches and important public buildings: but, even at their best, they tend to recall Richard Norman Shaw's rueful verdict on the products of revivalism in the arts: "like cut flowers, beautiful but dead."

We are also familiar with the results of the Bauhaus initiative; too often all the arts have in common is the lowest common denominator. Even when the best artists and architects were involved, the ideas that found expression tended to emphasize those aspects of painting and sculpture that were closest to architecture, thus promoting the dominance of the architect. If art is the manipulation of planes and masses, or form and color, reasoned the architect, why couldn't the architect do all that—why involve another artist? To put the question another way, if a sculptor is going to create a composition of painted pipes out on the plaza, why shouldn't the architect paint the pipes that were already part of the architecture?



Now artists and architects are looking beyond the Bauhaus, both back to the Beaux-Arts and forward to some as yet only dimly perceived form of expression. The Art Moderne work done from the 1920s through the 1940s is looking less and less like a failed compromise and more like a promising point of departure. At this interesting moment there might be some new means of collaboration among architects and other artists.

As part of our Centennial project, The Architectural League determined to try an experiment. We would commission a series of collaborations, hoping that we would be shown ways of giving new life to old traditions as well as perhaps discovering modes of collaboration that had not been tried before.

I believe our experiment has indeed been successful; the results are valuable in themselves and suggest directions for the future.

Three Categories of Result

The projects seem to fall into three categories. The first group is a series of variations on the traditional relationships between architect and painter or between architect and sculptor.

A second group tries to create a new relationship between architect and artist, one in which the work of the artist and the architect is more equal than is traditional, and where there is less of a separation between building and work of art.

The third group, which represents an unexpected result to our experiment, might be called "visions of the city." The artist and architect have collaborated on a concept for some aspect of the city. Neither the architect nor the artist is playing an accustomed role, and the collaboration is on the idea itself rather than on individual elements of the project.

Variations of the Traditional Theme

The firm of Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer has devised a situation which, while it is not a real project, could easily become one. Bryant Park, in the heart of New York City's midtown business district, is surely a viable location for the restaurant they propose. A cogent argument can be made that the use of part of a public park in this way will actually make the whole park more accessible, as the subculture that has taken over much of Bryant Park frightens many people away.

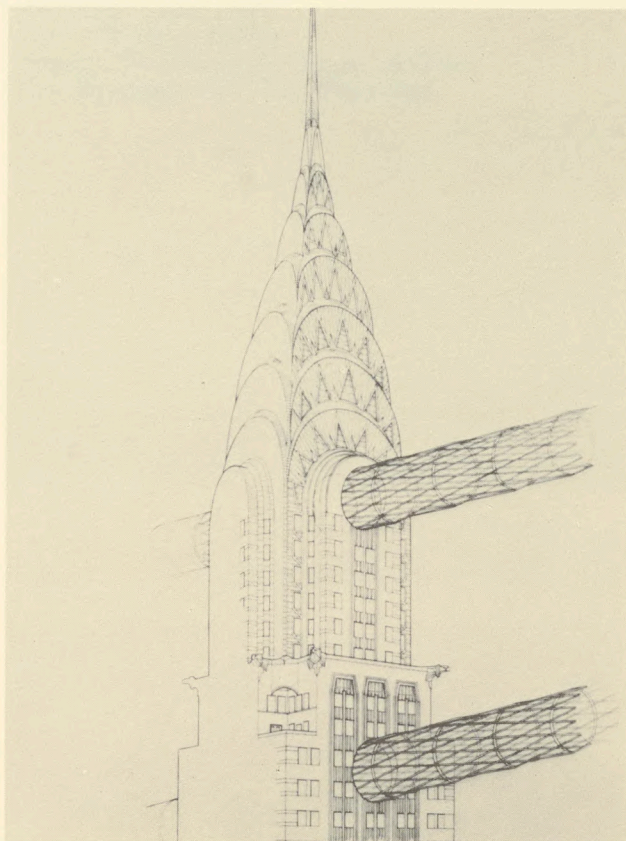
The concept proposed and the nature of the collaboration are both very much in the tradition of the American Renaissance. The neighboring New York Public Library is a masterpiece of that tradition; and Bryant Park was redesigned to harmonize with the Public Library during the 1930s.

Left

Architect: Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates
Artists: Jack Beal/Sandra Freckelton
Project: Restaurant Pavilions for Bryant Park:
Musings on Variety

Right

Architect: Frank Gehry
Artist: Richard Serra
Project: *Bridge Between Two Buildings:*
The World Trade Center and the Chrysler Building



The proposed restaurant is designed around an existing fountain on the main axis of the library, and it has the mirror-image formality that is traditional in such a setting. The Roccoco pillars proposed by Jack Beal are equally traditional; they could almost have come out of an eighteenth-century pattern book. Beal's patterns for the colored glass roof and for carpets and walkways are part of the design of the building, reflecting a relationship between architect and artist that would have seemed axiomatic to the founders of The Architectural League one hundred years ago. Sondra Freckelton's mural paintings also reflect such a customary relationship. This project shows that the methods of collaboration used during the American Renaissance are relevant to at least some kind of modern situations. At the same time, the art and architecture, while evocative of traditional forms, have a wit and style of their own.

The collaboration between Richard Meier and Frank Stella also reflects a traditional working relationship, but, in this case, one that does not evoke Renaissance forms. What we see are the four elevations of a characteristic Richard Meier house. Inside the windows are solar control devices of acrylic in different translucent colors that follow patterns derived from French curves. These translucent paints can be rolled up and down like the familiar cloth window shades. This concept is responsive to the needs of the occupants, who can dwell in colorful twilight, enjoy a normal view, or adopt various choices in between.

This discovery of a modern equivalent of stained glass has extensive possibilities, but is used here in a very disciplined way. The French curves are elegant found objects, if their use as the pattern for the windows requires their arrangement within a series of openings determined by the geometry of the building. The windows are thus another kind of found object, and the result is an exceptionally rigid set of constraints for the artist. On this occasion collaboration seems to have restricted the artist's options, not opened them up.

An ironic commentary on both traditional modes of collaboration and historical architecture and sculpture is offered by architect Charles Moore and sculptor Alice Atkinson (who has started calling herself Alice Wingwall for this occasion).

Stratford, the Lee family's great Virginia house that was completed about 1730, is held up as an ideal; but, as it is "not affordable" today, Stratford "fragments" are proposed instead.

Of course, the point of Stratford is that it is complete, solid, and balanced; that it approximates Alberti's ideal for a work of art: an entity to which nothing should be added and nothing taken away.

Instead of the idealized human form presented without clothes, Alice Wingwall gives us clothes without the human form, another unsettling idea. A sculptural group of T-shirts and dungarees is shown atop a colonnade in attitudes reminiscent of the sculpture fragments from the pediments of the Parthenon that are part of the famous Elgin Marbles. Other T-shirts are shown on top of columns, approximately where one would expect the straining torso of a sculpted figure to be holding up the cornice.

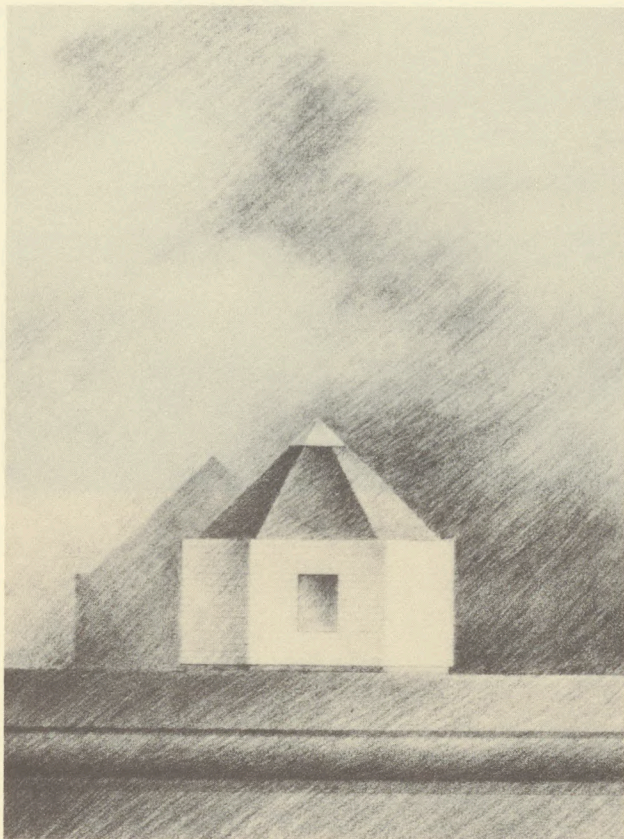
What is the connection to Stratford, which has no such colossal sculpture, clothed or unclothed? And what is the meaning of the porchbus, which looks like a cross between movable airline stairs and the automobiles that Frank Lloyd Wright designed for Broadacre City?

What I would like to think Charles Moore and Alice Wingwall are telling us is that they hope, through homeopathic doses of Stratford, to cure the American addiction to automobiles and mobile homes, gradually returning us to an environment of stability and balance. In the meantime, the human figure can steal back into art, assuming the clothes already provided for it. So it is possible to read this project as a plea for the return of a more traditional art and architecture and a more traditional relationship between architect and artist, all expressed in a rueful and ironic way that admits that today's society is unlikely to seek Stratfords or

Parthenons. However, by giving us a glossary as a statement, the authors allow us to construct all kinds of other interpretations. In the meantime, they have retired—safe in their armor of irony—to let you make of this project what you will.

A somewhat similar juxtaposition of classic themes and fragmentary architecture can be seen in the proposal by Robert Stern and Robert Graham. Graham has drawn a project for a statue and Stern has provided a pedestal. So far I might be talking about Augustus Saint-Gaudens working with McKim, Mead, & White. The Graham statue is to be a female figure cast in bronze, a classic concept although hardly a classic pose. But Stern's pedestal is actually a column, transforming the woman into a conqueror: Trajan or Lord Nelson. But wait a minute, the column is only a half circle, slanting into a series of equivocal forms vaguely reminiscent of an office building designed to fit an old-fashioned set of zoning regulations. We are told that the materials are to be "faux marble" and mirror glass. Mirror glass? Isn't that usually the skin for office buildings? How big is this thing going to be anyway: ten feet tall, the size of the Statue of Liberty, as tall as the Empire State Building? What are we to make of all this?

We see an intriguing composition, beautifully presented, and are then informed by the collaborators that it is an allegory symbolizing the current state of architecture, where Modernism and Classicism "co-exist in uneasy proximity."



*Architect: Cesar Pelli
Artist: William Bailey
Project: The Hexagonal Room: A Door,
Two Windows, and Three Paintings*

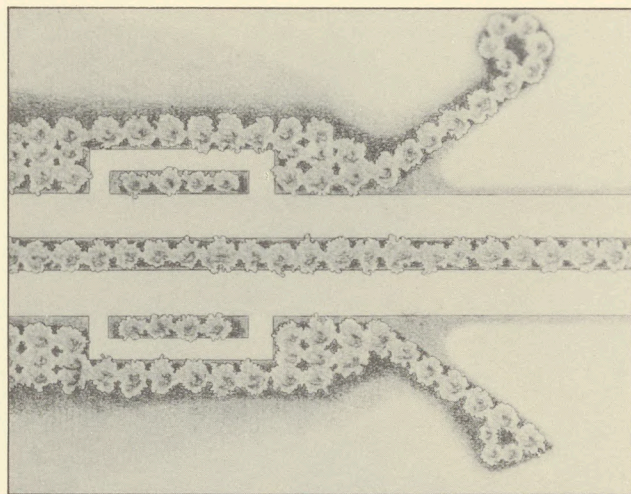
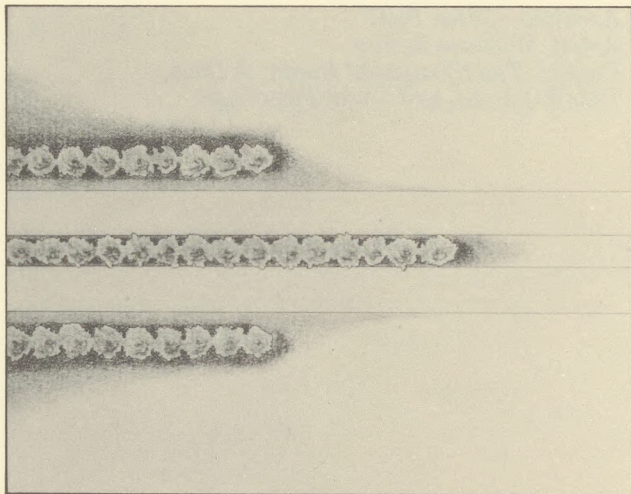
New Modes of Collaboration

Cesar Pelli and William Bailey have sought to divide design responsibility equally. They have succeeded by downplaying those aspects of architecture that make it a profession, a science, and a business and concentrating on architecture as an art. They have created a single, private room which has none of the complexities of multiple functions or public use. The room might be a meditation chamber. It might be a separate structure, a part of a larger building, or it could exist in various settings which are demonstrated by means of collage. The adaptability of this room to different contexts is reminiscent of one of the garden structures that is derived from Bramante's Tempietto at S. Pietro in Montorio; but the point here is the internal space, not the exterior mass.

The collaboration between Michael Graves and Lennart Anderson also emphasizes architecture as an art rather than architecture as a means of housing various social activities. The theme is a bacchanal—not the setting for a bacchanal but a representation of a bacchanal. Michael Graves's architectural composition is an extension of the painting at the same time that it locates the painting in space and provides an organizational framework for it. The effect is reminiscent of the integration of painted backgrounds, sculpture, and architectural vignettes of Baroque period without the same literalness. The extension of architecture into painting and of painting into architecture was also an important theme in art. Why should it not be so again?

Susana Torre and Charles Simonds have undertaken to collaborate in a far more complex project, the restoration and adaptive reuse of Ellis Island in New York Harbor. The idea was that architect and artist would collaborate on the concept for the whole project rather than confining the artist's role to the one percent, or the half of one percent, that might be allocated for art. An excellent choice of subject, but one that has proved difficult to carry out. The problem, as might be expected, is that artists are not used to dealing with complicated functional issues as part of the conceptual process, while architects are not used to deferring to another sensibility while creating a design, although architects expect to make changes as required by clients and routinely take the advice of other design professionals on such matters as engineering and landscape architecture.

Charles Simonds has often worked with miniature landscapes, and by participating in the redesign of Ellis Island he has had an opportunity to work on a problem in which landscape is a major factor. The artist and architect did work together on the reorganization of the buildings that strips them to a more classical composition and on the basic rearrangement of land and levels. However, after the conceptual process was completed, Charles Simonds withdrew, and what you see are drawings and designs that are essentially the work of Susana Torre.



*Architect: Emilio Ambasz
Artist: Michael Meritet
Project: The Four Gates to Columbus*

Visions of the City

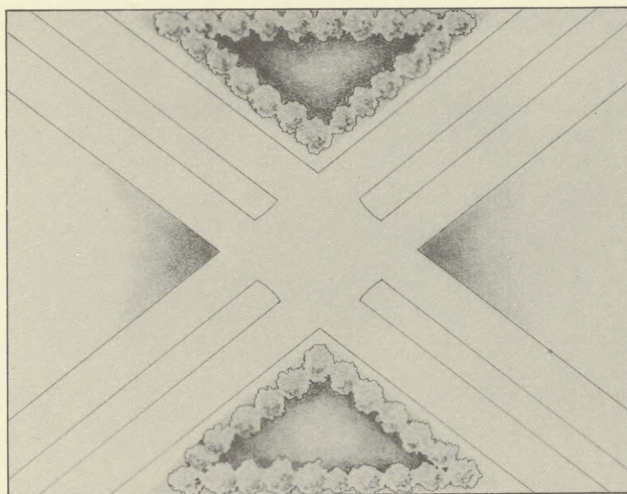
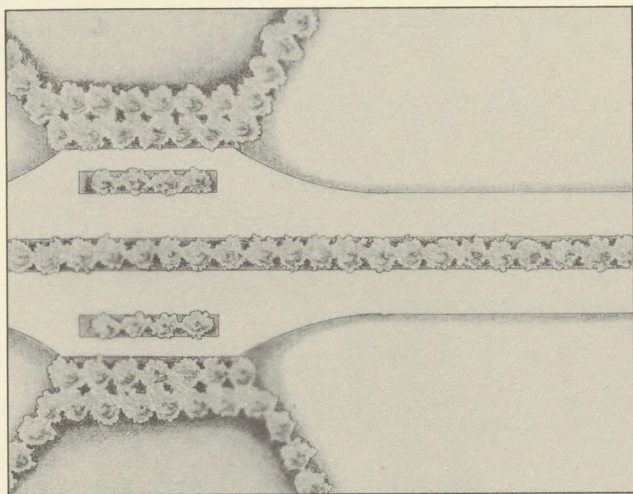
The vision of the city presented by Emilio Ambasz and Michael Meritet is akin to those of the City Beautiful Movement, which was an element of the American Renaissance. The whole concept is also a delicate compliment to J. Irwin Miller, who has been the patron for so much architecture and art in his home city of Columbus, Indiana. The Ambasz/Meritet design presents Columbus as if it were the city of a Renaissance prince, a city like Florence, Italy, with an edge and gateways. The beautiful aerial map gives the important buildings of Columbus a much greater legibility than they have in reality, and the landscaped gateways would indeed enhance the sense of arrival or departure from the city.

According to the text submitted by the authors, the concept is by Ambasz and the realization of the images by Meritet. If this were a conventional building project, we might say that Meritet has only functioned as an illustrator, and thus we have not seen a true collaboration. However, we are talking about a visionary concept, where the illustration is the primary reality, so the illustrator does become a partner in the collaboration.

There is more than a little bit of black humor in Alice Aycock and James Freed's vision of the city. Freed postulates that in some long-ago, now-forgotten culture, what is now Times Square was considered the Omphalos, the navel of the universe. (Times Square is often described as representing various other anatomical elements of the universe.) Today only fragments of an ancient religious structure remain, segmented by Broadway and Seventh Avenue, much the way streets in modern Rome may go through the site of ancient monuments.

Alice Aycock then imagines that this ancient structure has been modified to become a "Palace of Versailles Waterworks." What takes place at the waterworks she has designed is a happening (remember when happenings were the latest works of art?), which is based on the normal bustle and low-life activities of Times Square but emphasizes the futility of much of the activity and the cruelty and sadism of many Times Square denizens.

Both Frank Gehry and Richard Serra are known for working with industrial materials, and it seemed likely that their collaboration would produce something strong and tough-minded. A bridge is an interesting subject for a collaboration, as it might be taken as a symbol for collaboration itself. As a vision of the city, this bridge proposal seems to be saying that Manhattan south of 60th Street is incomplete as a sculptural and architectural composition without



a link between the midtown and downtown clusters of tall buildings, something that would pull them together and give Manhattan an even bolder scale than it has today.

Frank Gehry and Richard Serra have presented the project that is most ambitious in scope and the one that has evolved the most during the production of the exhibition. It began as a proposal for a bridge between the Chrysler Building and the World Trade Center towers. It has increased greatly in plausibility—if not in practicality—by the addition of two more structures located at the Queensborough Bridge and at the Hudson River. These structures give some support to the span and some lateral stability.

The fourth of these visions of the city concerns the city of the dead. Stanley Tigerman, the architect, has selected Richard Haas as his artist collaborator and the two have chosen the topic, "The Great American Cemetery," perhaps in contradistinction to Aldo Rossi's well-known cemetery project.

In other projects Tigerman has shown an interest in presenting a banal suburban house as an American Icon. Here miniature suburban houses become grave markers, emphasizing the fact that many cemeteries are laid out as miniature cities and that their planning concepts derive from the same sources as those for cities and suburbs.

The collaboration between artist and architect has really been in the presentation of the idea for the exhibition: Haas's skyline painting and the Tigerman office's models create the illusions of a "box within a box."

Is this an appropriate role for an artist collaborator? Evidently Richard Haas didn't think so. He went off and selected a new collaborator, one not commissioned by The Architectural League, Edward Mills, with whom he had worked on previous projects. The necropolis that Richard Haas and Edward Mills designed bears a disturbing resemblance to the Renaissance Center office, hotel, and shopping complex in Detroit. It can be considered a perfectly serious urban design proposal, however, in a plausible location, with a carefully worked-out symbolism. It might even be financially feasible. One can envision a real-estate marketability study which determines that the project is economically viable at a purchase price of x dollars a unit and an "absorption rate" of y hundred a year. The obvious intent of this proposal is to present a completely different way of thinking about cemeteries from the one shown in the original concept.

Collaboration: Artists & Architects

New-York Historical Society
New York, N.Y.
March 3-June 7 1981

Albright-Knox Art Gallery
Buffalo, N.Y.
June 26-August 2 1981

Dallas Museum of Fine Arts
Dallas, TX.
August 19-September 27 1981

Otis Art Institute
Los Angeles, CA.
October 10-November 15 1981

The Lowe Art Museum
Coral Gables, FL.
January 30-March 14 1982

Huntington Art Gallery
Austin, TX.
April 3-May 16 1982

Corcoran Gallery of Art
Washington D.C.
July 1-August 15 1982

Institute of Contemporary Art
Boston, MA.
September 4-October 17 1982

Itinerary of the Exhibition

Akron Art Institute
Akron, OH.
November 13-December 31 1982

Mary and Leigh Block Gallery
Evanston, IL.
January 22-March 6 1983

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Richmond, VA.
March 26-May 8 1983

Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum
Wausau, WI.
July 30-September 11 1983

The University of Iowa Museum of Art
Iowa City, IO.
October 1-November 13 1983

About the Book

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